CARL THE PLASTIC BABY IT'S FAUXREEL!

Carl the Plastic Baby isn't an ordinary doll
He's not available in any stores
And he's not for kids

Carl, the brainchild of renowned Toronto street artist Dan Bergeron (a.k.a fauxreel) was born from an idea that Bergeron had to create a product that is essentially unnecessary and useless, and then to sell it to people.

Editor Julian Kong / Writer Michelle Viljoen, James Hendicott and Courtney Tait

Dan **Bergeron** is well-known for his photographic street art that delivers criticism on social issues, like his project 'The Unaddressed' which featured larger-than-life sized black-and-white full-length portraits of actual "underhoused" people pasted onto clear spaces in the city, with posters voicing their opinion on the issue of underhousing.

Although the Carl project comes across as a marketing campaign rather than street art, it shouldn't be confused as such. As with his other projects, Dan has made Carl visible throughout the city by utilizing billboards. One billboard sells Carl with the tagline "It's okay if you drop him" or "No pee pee or poo poo". This 'marketing campaign' coupled with the quote "People who say they sleep like a baby usually don't have one," by Rev. Leo J. Burke that is included in Dan's e-mail signatures could easily lead one to believe that this is an anti-baby campaign.

Not so, **Bergeron** explains: "Carl is an interrogation of the capitalism surrounding babies."

When **Bergeron** decided to create a product to sell to people that they didn't need, he looked to his friends for inspiration.

"I looked at my life and the lives of my friends and family to see what they were buying. I began to notice how many unnecessary products were being hawked at parents and how expensive they were. These unnecessary products have really been created for parents to compete in our consumer society."

The realization that parents would almost indiscriminately splurge on babies, coupled with the fact that the average age of Canadians, when they have children, is rising convinced **Bergeron** to create something baby-related. And so, Carl was conceived and the 'adoption agency' started. While selling Carl to people as the perfect baby – he doesn't cry, get hurt or interfere with your social life, **Bergeron** stays mindful of the actual message he's trying to convey with this project. "This project was not a critique of reproduction, but rather a critique and examination of advertising and consumerism."

And **Bergeron**'s project has succeeded to prove people's willingness to buy unnecessary things as he is currently in the process of setting up a few 'adoptions' of these babies who are usually rescued from thrift or secondhand stores. Unlike other adoption agencies, **Bergeron**'s isn't interested in the prospective parents' salary level or their educational background. If a plastic baby fits in with your lifestyle, you can contact **Bergeron** to get the adoption process started.

"It [Carl] will keep their [prospective parents'] need for a real baby at bay and not make them feel left out because their peers and friends have real babies of their own." Maybe it's not unnecessary at all.

TEN REASONS WHY A PLASTIC BABY IS BETTER THAN THE REAL ONE

By James Hendicott

Expense
Let's put aside for a second the fact that the initial expense for a plastic baby is substantially more (should have paid out for condoms, you cheapskate…), splashing out for a child in this financial climate has to rank somewhere below a stress relieving holiday in Bali. While your average kid might cost a good 10 percent of a solid salary to bring up, you can double that for any kid born in Korea and count on paying off various ill-equipped schools to give the child an education that the State's going to give them a few months later anyway. All in the name of keeping up.

Out on the pull
We're sure there are several ways you can make the fact that you have a plastic baby an attractive trait when you're 15 beers down at 5am on a Sunday morning. Failing that, you can just leave the 'baby' with the barman. Being woken up by the young 'un when you get in is a certain deal maker. Both are a loss, but we both know which one's worse.

Plastic is bad for the environment
Yet far better than another human body. We're already overcrowded, and the carbon damage done by an undersized doll owned by a slightly demented human with a plastic fixation is going to do relatively little damage to the ozone layer next to 80-odd years of cabbage chomping, methane-ejecting humanoid. Even if they do turn into the next Seo Tae Ji…

In case of damage
When your plastic baby falls down a stair well, gets eaten by a dog or gets left in a corner and forgotten about for a couple of days, the worst thing that can happen is you'll fall over it later. Do the same with a real life child and we don't even need to spell out the consequences.

In case of a heavy night
In one case you can expect a visit from child services, and a few weeks on an alcohol rehabilitation course. In the other, you'll land up with a confused bouncer at the nearest club and a few 'interesting' pictures the next morning of a plastic head sticking out the top of your underwear. Just don't confuse the two of those!

International flights
When travelling long distances a baby requires 10 hours worth of attention, occupies lap space that's best saved for vodka and coke refills and experiments involving cardboard food, and makes you the least popular passenger on the entire flight. A plastic baby just confuses security and rests happily in the hold, leaving you to explore more interesting options, be that the latest movies or a shot at the mile-high club.

Mental Sanity
While you might be right to question the sanity of a person who holds a plastic child close to their heart, at least that person had the same issues before the child came along. Those with a real child have years of forgetfulness, mindless dedication to a human who they can't see through anything but rose tinted spectacles and sleep deprivation ahead of them. One remains 'parent' and remains the same, the other goes dramatically downhill.

Scent
There's something oddly appetizing about the smell of new plastic. It starts out smelling like a chemical factory, and bares some resemblance to sniffing a glue stick. A baby starts off smelling bad, eventually stops omitting publically and then develops body odor instead. Win win, not…

Decision Making
Let's face it; we humans are awful at it. The only reason we say we learn from our experiences is that it's the easiest way to justify the ridiculous things we get up to on a daily basis. Plastic, on the other hand, is entirely lacking in brains, and so can be guided by your decision to either a.) Do nothing at all or b.) Do something entirely of your choosing. Which, at the end of the day, is far better than getting knocked up by a heroin-riddled 'bad boy' at sixteen and then burning your cash for the next 10 years. Options, options…

Future
While plastic is a relatively sustainable substance, one that's likely to live on when the world fills with noxious gases and humans can no longer live, real life babies face a far less promising future. Harsh though it may be, your fake babies are almost sure to outlive your real one. And that applies whether you pull the arm off or not.